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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0377
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 2633
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000726

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KAWC](#) [UN](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: IO/RHS KESHAP DISCUSSES UNHRC, SECURITY COUNCIL,
SRI LANKA, IRAN, AND SUDAN WITH FRENCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS

REF: PARIS POINTS MAY 14 2009

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Greg D'Elia for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

¶11. (C) Summary: IO/RHS Director Atul Keshap met on May 14 with French MFA IO DAS-equivalent for Human Rights Jacques Pellet and desk officers Cecile Vigneau and Emanuel Pineda to discuss several issues affecting UN agencies and regional issues in Sri Lanka and Sudan, in advance of a May 15 MFA-led conference on Sexual Orientation to mobilize support for a related UNGA resolution. Pellet emphasized the French view that the U.S. election to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) was an excellent development (notal), but cautioned the U.S. not to let a desire for consensus weaken the HRC's focus on human rights abuses. Pellet said France is seeking USG pressure to overcome Israel's refusal to allow a visit by Special Rapporteur Goldstone. France also wants to avoid having an Iranian seat on the HRC in 2010. France would like U.S. help to support and lobby the Egyptians to preserve and renew the HRC Sudan mandate. France desires USG support to create a special rapporteur on discrimination against women. On other issues, Pellet registered overall satisfaction with the outcome of the Durban II conference on racism, including agreed language on freedom of expression issues deemed unacceptable by the USG. On Sri Lanka, Pellet expressed frustration at GRULAC resistance to a special Security Council session. He reiterated the French commitment to helping the USG on GITMO, as seen in facilitating the May 15 transfer of former detainee Boumediene. In return, France requests the U.S. first review any cases of detainees who were captured when they were children, as well as sign the UNICEF Paris Commitment on Child Soldier. End Summary.

¶12. (C) Functional Issues:

- **UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL:** Pellet, who will soon be the French DCM in Geneva, appealed to the U.S. not to let a desire for consensus weaken what remains of the UN Human Rights Council's (HRC) focus on human rights abuses. Pellet asked if the U.S. could "work on Egypt," since it is a large recipient of U.S. aid but usually seemed to be at the center of problems in the UN system. Maybe with U.S. pressure, Pellet admitted, the Egyptians could be more cooperative, especially on issues relating to Sudan and Sri Lanka. Keshap mentioned that he was on his way to Egypt to seek ways to work with Egypt to advance U.S. interests on the HRC.

- **UNHRC SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR GOLDSTONE:** The French are urging

the U.S. to ask Israel to let UNHRC Special Rapporteur Judge Richard Goldstone, who was tasked to investigate alleged war crimes in Gaza during the December-January war, visit Israel so he would be more likely to produce a balanced report. Pellet believes that if Israel blocks Goldstone's visit, it will become a troubling issue during the September HRC session. Keshap mentioned U.S. officials would receive Goldstone during a visit to Washington out of respect for his stature, despite our concerns about the unbalanced mandate and the HRC's persistent bias against Israel.

- FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: France is fine with the Durban II incitement language, the "strongest in 10 years" in the UN. If the U.S. wants to seek a fix, it must operate from that baseline. Pellet said the HRC "is what it is," but that we must all remember there is no other similar forum to address human rights abuses. There are those that want to weaken the institution, he said, and that was why like-minded countries would need to work together to strengthen the HRC. Keshap explained why the Durban incitement formula is unacceptable to the U.S., and explained Washington would work with key Muslim countries to try to find a way forward on freedom of expression that could respect U.S. red lines while addressing concerns among OIC countries about the status of Muslims and Islam.

- UNHRC WEOG PRESIDENCY: The French are grateful for U.S. support. Keshap underlined that the U.S. was indicating to China and Russia that our support for the French WEOG Presidency in the UNHRC was a one-off understanding made without prejudice to standing P5 agreements on Presidencies

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of other UN committees and bodies.

- SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN: France will push for the establishment of such a mandate and hopes the U.S. will support. Pellet confirmed that French Secretary of State for Human Rights Rama Yade will be in Geneva June 4.

- SEXUAL ORIENTATION: Pellet said there was no immediate follow-on to the French-sponsored UNGA declaration, and that LGBT groups want to go at a liberal pace. The French held a conference on the subject in Paris on May 15 in order to highlight opportunities for civil society to discuss next steps. Pellet noted that the French had not heard about possible action in HRC.

-UNESCO DIRECTOR GENERAL: The GOF shares our profound concerns about the candidacy of Egyptian Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni, but Pellet said that there was a dearth of other good candidates. He noted the deadline for announcing is May 30. The French fear that Hosni will win and turn UNESCO into another battleground like the HRC.

-UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR): Pellet and Keshap agreed French and U.S. technical experts in Geneva would work together to develop proposals to limit procedural dodges used by Cuba and others to deflect criticism. Pellet highlighted Brazilian efforts as a model the U.S. could emulate, since Brazil did a great in its UPR presentation.

13. (C) Country-Specific Issues:

- SUDAN: The French seek U.S. intercession with Egypt to maintain and renew the UNHRC mandate for a year.

- SRI LANKA: France is still trying to get to 16 votes for a special UN Security Council (UNSC) session, but four GRULAC (Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries) members will only support if there's no resolution, defeating the purpose. The HRC must show it is acting, not just spewing language, Pellet noted. He said French Foreign Minister Kouchner is prepared to call Japan and the Ukraine, for example, two countries that so far have been unwilling to

help. Pellet also said that during President Sarkozy's March visit to Mexico, the Mexicans reiterated their support for the HRC, wanting to play a larger role in the institution.

- IRAN: Pellet noted that Iran is seeking a seat on the HRC in 2010. Aside from President Obama's overtures to improve relations with the country, Pellet said France believes an Iran seat on the HRC would not be a good idea. Like Belarus' failed HRC bid in 2007, Pellet cautioned that the U.S., France, and the U.K. would need to "kill it" by pushing for other Asian candidates, like Thailand. Otherwise, we would have to figure out what to do if Iran became a member. France is primarily concerned with the high number of executions in Iran, as well as the lack of freedom of the press.

¶4. (SBU) Other Issues:

- GITMO: Pellet stated France wants to help the U.S. close down the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and detainee Lakhdar Boumediene arrived in Paris on May 15. In return, France also requests the U.S. first review any cases of detainees who were captured when they were children. The GOF also hopes we sign the UNICEF Paris Commitment on Child Soldier.

¶5. (U) IO/RHS Keshap has cleared this message.

PEKALA